

# *Kaisersalbung.* The Unction of Emperors in Late Byzantine Coronation Ritual

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The anointing of emperors (*Kaisersalbung*) in the late Byzantine coronation ritual formed part of the subject of an often cited article by Professor George Ostrogorsky in 1955.<sup>1</sup> The purpose of these few words is to re-examine the evidence for this practice and to suggest some different conclusions.

Ostrogorsky argued that anointing with oil was never a part of the Byzantine coronation ceremony before the Fourth Crusade in 1204 and that all references to unction in the literature of the twelfth century should be interpreted in a figurative or metaphorical sense and not literally. Much the same arguments were advanced in greater detail by F. E. Brightman in 1901. But, as Brightman observed, 'it still remains difficult to say when the metaphorical use of *χρτεν* passes into the literal'.<sup>2</sup> When Niketas Choniates writes of the Emperor

1. G. Ostrogorsky, 'Zur Kaisersalbung und Schilderhebung im spätbyzantinischen Krönungszeremoniell', *Historia*, IV (*Festschrift für Wilhelm Ensslin*, 1955), 246–56 (reprinted in G. Ostrogorsky, *Zur Byzantinischen Geschichte. Ausgewählte kleine Schriften* (Darmstadt, 1973), pp. 142–52).

2. Ostrogorsky, *op. cit.*, 246f. F. E. Brightman, 'Byzantine Imperial Coronations', *Journal of Theological Studies*, II (1901), 385. Cf. Aikaterine Christophilopoulou, 'Εκλογή, αναγόρευσις καὶ στέψις τοῦ βυζαντινοῦ αὐτοκράτορος' (Athens, 1957), pp. 169f. See also L.-P. Raybaud, *Le gouvernement et l'administration centrale de l'empire byzantin sous les premiers Paléologues (1258–1354)* (Paris, 1968), pp. 69–73, though the author seems to have been unaware of Ostrogorsky's article. The essay by I. Goschew, 'Zur Frage der Krönungszeremonien und die zeremonielle Gewandung der Byzantinischen

Manuel I having ‘anointed’ the Patriarch who anointed him this, is, as Ostrogorsky remarks, clearly a metaphor or a play on words.<sup>3</sup> But is it so certain that the same is true when Choniates writes of Alexios III going to St. Sophia ‘that he might be anointed according to custom and be invested with the imperial regalia’?<sup>4</sup> It is said that the verb *χρίειν* is here used once again in a figurative sense, since the phrase ‘according to custom’ cannot literally refer to anointing, there being no evidence from the sources for the anointing of any of the predecessors of Alexios III. This is an argument *ex silentio*. It may perhaps be mere chance that no sources specifically report the anointing of any twelfth-century emperor before Alexios III.

After 1204, however, there seems to be no doubt that the practice was established as a part of the Byzantine coronation ritual. Theodore I Laskaris, founder of the Empire at Nicaea, is said to have been anointed as well as crowned by Michael Autoreianos, whom he had appointed as Patriarch. The evidence for this fact comes not from the historian of Nicaea, George Akropolites, but once again from Niketas Choniates.<sup>5</sup> In the *Silentium* which Choniates composed, and in his *Speech* on the proclamation of Theodore as Emperor, there are clear references to anointing. In the *Silentium* there is mention of ‘the Davidian unction’ (*Δαυίδειον τὸ χρίσμα*).<sup>6</sup> In the *Speech* there is

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und der Bulgarischen Herrscher im Mittelalter’, *Byzantinobulgarica*, II (1966), 145–68, contains several inaccuracies and adds nothing new to the subject. The iconographical evidence for the rite of unction is discussed by Ch. Walter, ‘The Significance of Unction in Byzantine Iconography’, below pp. 53–73.

3. Niketas Choniates, *Historia* (CSHB), p. 70 line 12: . . . προβληθεὶς οὖν ὁ Μιχαὴλ πατριάρχης ἐξ αὐτῆς τὸν χρίσαντα χρίει τὰ ἱερὰ ἐσαφικόμενον μέλαθρα. The text of this passage is rendered with a significant difference by Isaac Habert, *Ἀρχιερατικόν. Liber Pontificalis Ecclesiae Graecae* (Paris, 1643), p. 627: . . . ταινιώσαντος αὐτὸν ἐπὶ νεῷ κυρίου τῷ αὐτοκρατορικῷ στεφανώματι, ὃς καὶ χρίει τὰ ἱερὰ ἐσαφικόμενον μέλαθρα.

4. Choniates, *Historia*, p. 603 line 7: . . . ὅπως κατὰ τὸ ἔθιμον βασιλεῖα χρισθῇ καὶ περιβάλλεται τὰ τοῦ κράτους σύμβολα.

5. George Akropolites, ed. A. Heisenberg, *Georgii Acropolitae Opera*, I (Leipzig, 1903), p. 11, writes only of the proclamation and coronation of Theodore. See M. Angold, *A Byzantine Government in exile. Government and Society under the Laskarids of Nicaea, 1204–1261* (Oxford, 1975), pp. 12–13.

6. *Nicetae Choniatae Orationes et Epistulae*, ed. J. A. van Dieten (Corpus Fontium Historiae Byzantinae: Berlin and New York, 1972), p. 127 lines 20–23: (ὁ Θεὸς) τὴν θερμὴν ὁρμὴν καὶ τὸν ὑπὲρ τοῦ καλοῦ ζῆλον τῆς βασιλείας μου

the expression: ἐς βασιλέα χρίουσιν αὐτοκράτορα.<sup>7</sup> It is hard to see why the same Niketas Choniates should use the same terms for unction *metaphorically* in his historical writings and *literally* in his rhetorical works. Ostrogorsky explained this discrepancy by supposing that Choniates was writing his *History* before anointing had become a part of the Byzantine coronation ritual, and his rhetorical works afterwards.<sup>8</sup> This supposition implies that both the *Silention* and the *Speech* were written after Theodore's coronation had taken place. But this now appears to be false. J. L. van Dieten in his recent edition of and commentary on the Speeches and Letters of Niketas Choniates dates the *Speech* in question to the summer of 1206, after the Emperor's return from battle, and the *Silention* to the beginning of Lent in the year 1208.<sup>9</sup> Both works were therefore composed *before* Theodore's coronation and the references to his anointing point to the future and not to the past. The evidence in fact suggests that Theodore Laskaris was already recognized as Emperor and had adopted the title of Basileus in some of his dominions by 1205, even though Akropolites describes him as Despot up to the time of his coronation, and even though he was not crowned until 1208.<sup>10</sup>

As Akropolites relates, the coronation was performed by the Patriarch, whose appointment Theodore had secured in advance. The interpretation which Ostrogorsky put upon part of the letter that Theodore wrote to the Greek clergy on this subject has already been challenged by F. Dölger.<sup>11</sup> The Emperor there expresses the hope that a Patriarch will be

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προσδεξάμενος, εἰς τὴν βασιλείαν ταύτην ἀνθρωπάκει περιωπὴν Δαυίδειον τὸ χρίσμα καὶ τὴν ἀρχαιρεσίαν ταυτίζουσιν δωρησά <μενος>.

7. Ibid., p. 134 line 18.

8. Ostrogorsky, op. cit., 250.

9. J.-L. van Dieten, *Niketas Choniates. Erläuterungen zu den Reden und Briefen nebst einer Biographie* (Supplementa Byzantina, 2: Berlin & New York, 1971), pp. 141–2, 146–52. See also A. D. Karpozilos, *The Ecclesiastical Controversy between the Kingdom of Nicaea and the Principality of Epiros (1217–1233)* (Βυζαντινά Κείμενα καὶ Μελέται, 7: Thessaloniki, 1973), pp. 22–5.

10. Van Dieten, *Niketas Choniates. Erläuterungen*, p. 154: 'Die Reden, welche Niketas an ihn richtete und für ihn verfasste, lassen aber keinen Zweifel, dass er in dem ihm botmässigen Reichsteil ab 1205 als Kaiser anerkannt wurde und den Titel Basileus führte'. Angold, op. cit., pp. 43–5.

11. F. Dölger, in *BZ*, XLIX (1956), 201. Cf. Angold, op. cit., p. 43.

elected before Holy Week, the week in which it was the custom for the holy chrism of the *myron* (τὸ θεῖον τοῦ μύρου χρίσμα) to be prepared and consecrated by the Patriarch's hand. This statement does not, as Dölger pointed out, refer to the anointing of the Emperor ('die heilige Salbung mit dem Myron') but to the consecration of the chrism itself which was traditionally performed by the Patriarch once a year, in Holy Week.<sup>12</sup> The last such consecration should have occurred in 1207, at which time there was no Patriarch. New chrism therefore had to be prepared in Holy Week of 1208, whether it was intended for baptism or for coronation.<sup>13</sup> The holy chrism or *myron* was normally reserved for the sacrament of confirmation after baptism. Its use in the ritual of coronation will be discussed below. But it is clear that in 1208 Theodore Laskaris was anxious to secure the appointment of a fully competent Patriarch without further delay so that his own position as Emperor could be given the proper blessing of the Church; and if one is to take the words of Niketas Choniates literally in this context then the Patriarch's blessing was to include the anointing of the new Emperor.

It is hard to believe, however, that this part of the inauguration of an Emperor was an innovation in Byzantine practice. The first properly constituted Emperor and Patriarch in exile after 1204 would surely have taken pains to see that everything was done according to the tradition, even perhaps to the extent of reviving customs that had long since lapsed in the

12. See P. Menevizoglou, *Τὸ Ἅγιον Μύρον ἐν τῇ Ὁρθόδοξῳ Ἀνατολικῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ* ('*Ανάλεκτα Βλατάδων*, 14: Thessaloniki, 1972), pp. 129f. and *passim*; L. Petit, 'Du pouvoir de consacrer le Saint Chrême', and 'Composition et consécration du Saint Chrême', *EO*, III (1899), 1–7, 129–42; E. Hermann, 'Wann ist die Chrysamweihe zum ausschliesslichen Vorrecht der Patriarchen geworden?', *Sbornik v pamet' na Prof. P. Nikou* (Sofia, 1940), pp. 509–15; Angold, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

13. It is surely to these circumstances (the appointment of a head of the Church and the preparation of the holy chrism) that Michael Choniates refers in his letter to Basil Kamateros, ed. Sp. P. Lambros, *Μιχαὴλ Ἀκομινάτου τοῦ Χωνιάτου τὰ Σωζόμενα*, II (Athens, 1880), p. 258 lines 20–4: οἷον δὴ κάκεινο τὸ ὑποθέσθαι τῷ Βασιλεῖ κεφαλὴν ἐπιθεῖναι τῇ καθ' ἡμᾶς ἱερωσύνῃ καὶ μηκέτι περιορᾶν τὸ ἱερατικὸν χρίσμα κινδυνεύον ἐκλιπὲς γενέσθαι, ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐκ τοῦ διπλοῦ μύρου εὐδομίας ἀπολαύειν τὸ βασιλεῖον ἱεράτευμα. Basil Kamateros, who was uncle of the wife of Theodore Laskaris, seems to have advised the Emperor to take these measures.

ceremonies of Constantinople, such as that of raising the Emperor on a shield at his proclamation.<sup>14</sup> It is even harder to believe, with Ostrogorsky, that the Byzantines in exile would have adopted or imitated the practice of *Kaisersalbung* from their foreign rival and usurper in Constantinople.<sup>15</sup> The anointing of Baldwin of Flanders at his coronation as Latin Emperor in St. Sophia in 1204 is vividly described by Robert of Clari.<sup>16</sup> It was performed according to the usage established in western coronation ritual long before the thirteenth century.<sup>17</sup> But this gives no ground for deducing that the anointing of Theodore Laskaris, heralded as early as 1205 by Niketas Choniates, was to be in imitation of that of Baldwin. Nor is it at all certain that the practice of anointing was adopted or adapted in the Byzantine ceremony only after 1204. Indeed there appear to be reasons for

14. The first certainly attested case of an Emperor being raised on a shield in the thirteenth century is that of Theodore II Laskaris in 1254. Akropolites, ed. Heisenberg, I, p. 105 lines 20–1; Nikephoros Gregoras, *Byzantina Historia* (CSHB), I, p. 55 lines 1–3. Ostrogorsky's suggestion (op. cit., 255) that this ceremony was revived at Nicaea in imitation of the *Schilderhebung* of Baldwin of Flanders at Constantinople in 1204 is unacceptable. Neither Geoffrey of Villehardouin nor Robert of Clari mentions any such ceremony at the coronation of Baldwin, despite the assertions of J. Longnon, *L'empire latin de Constantinople et la principauté de Morée* (Paris, 1949), pp. 50f., and others—most recently B. Hendrickx, 'Les institutions de l'empire latin de Constantinople (1204–1261): Le pouvoir impérial', *Byzantina*, VI (1974), 102–3. On the iconographical and other evidence for *Schilderhebung* and its revival in the thirteenth century see C. Walter, 'Raising on a shield in Byzantine iconography', *REB*, XXXIII (1975), 315–56.

15. Ostrogorsky, op. cit., 252: 'Dennoch zeigen die Quellenangaben, die wir anführen konnten, mit genügender Sicherheit, dass die Sitte der Kaisersalbung im Kaiserreich von Nikaia bestanden hat. . . . Diese Sitte, die sich in der Gedankenordnung der Byzantiner so fest eingefügt hatte, war jedoch ohne Zweifel in Byzanz in Nachahmung abendländischer Vorbilder entstanden'.

16. Robert de Clari, *La conquête de Constantinople*, ed. P. Lauer (Paris, 1924), § XCVI, p. 95; ed. C. Hopf, in *Chroniques gréco-romanes inédites ou peu connues* (Berlin, 1873), p. 74. Kalojan of Bulgaria was likewise anointed and crowned according to the Latin rite by the cardinal legate Leo of Santa Croce at Trnovo in November 1204. See R. L. Wolff, 'The "Second Bulgarian Empire". Its Origin and History to 1204', *Speculum*, XXIV (1949), 197; J. R. Sweeney, 'Innocent III, Hungary and the Bulgarian Coronation: A Study in Medieval Diplomacy', *Church History*, XLII (1973), 320–34 (especially 323–4 and references).

17. See, e.g., H. A. Wilson, 'The English Coronation Orders', *Journal of Theological Studies*, II (1901), 481–504.

believing that the Byzantine *Kaisersalbung* of the thirteenth century was neither an imitation of western procedure nor a recent innovation in the Byzantine ritual.<sup>18</sup>

On both of these points it is instructive to examine the evidence from the other Byzantine state in exile after 1204, in Epiros and Thessalonica. There the question of crowning an Emperor did not arise until the victorious campaigns of Theodore Komnenos Doukas had culminated in the capture of Thessalonica from the Latins in 1224. However unlikely it may be that the Emperors at Nicaea should consciously have adopted from their enemies any procedure affecting their imperial status, it is still less probable that their rival in Thessalonica would have followed their example; for the Greeks of Epiros were even more outspokenly anti-Latin than those of Nicaea. Theodore Doukas was crowned Emperor at Thessalonica some time after 1224. Nikephoros Gregoras reports that he assumed the imperial title and that he was 'anointed' by the then Archbishop of Bulgaria.<sup>19</sup> Most of the

18. The sources make very little specific mention of anointing at any of the imperial coronations in Nicaea. George Akropolites says nothing about it. Gregoras, however, records that Theodore II Laskaris was anointed by the Patriarch: Gregoras, I, p. 55 line 23: *ὁ βασιλεὺς παρὰ τοῦ πατριάρχου χρισθεὶς καὶ τὸ στέφος ἀναδυσάμενος*. Furthermore, the anointing of Michael VIII is clearly implied by Pachymeres (see below p. 46 and n. 30); and, for what it is worth, a short chronicle listing the Patriarchs between 1204 and 1254 says the same of John Vatatzes: *ἔπειτα μανοὴλ ὁ φιλοσόφος, καὶ ὦν καὶ ὀνομαζόμενος· δς τὸν Βατάτζην βασιλέα ἐχρυσεν*. Sp. P. Lambros, *Ἐνθυμήσεων ἤτοι χρονικὸν σημειωμάτων συλλογὴ πρώτη, Νέος Ἑλληνομνήμων*, II (1910), § 27, p. 134. Nikephoros Blemmydes composed a poem in honour of the birth of Théodore II's son John Laskaris. In this he makes much play on the word 'anointed', implying that the new prince was already anointed by virtue of his descent from a line of anointed Emperors. *Nicephori Blemmydae Curriculum Vitae et Carmina*, ed. A. Heisenberg (Leipzig, 1896), p. 110 lines 8–9: *Χριστοῦ πατὴρ κληρουχικῶς αὐτάναξ, αὐτοκράτωρ, / ἐκ γὰρ Χριστοῦ Χριστός ἐστι· καὶ σὺ χριστὸς ἐκ τούτου*. Angold, op. cit., p. 45.

19. Gregoras, I, p. 26 lines 6–8: *αὐτίκα δὲ καὶ βασιλείας ἐαυτῷ περιτίθῃσι δνομα, καὶ χρίεται βασιλικῶς παρὰ τοῦ τηλικαῦτα τὴν τῆς Βουλγαρίας ἀρχιεπισκοπὴν διυθύνοντος*. For the date of Theodore's coronation L. Stiernon, 'Les origines du Despotat d'Epire (suite). La date du couronnement de Théodore Doukas', *Actes du XII<sup>e</sup> Congrès International des Etudes Byzantines*, II (Belgrade, 1964), pp. 197–202, proposed the end of 1227 or early in 1228. Some doubt about this chronology is expressed by Karpozilos, op. cit., p. 74, who has now argued in favour of the formerly accepted date of 1225: A. Karpozilos, 'The date of coronation of Theodore Doukas Angelos', *Byzantina*,

evidence for Theodore's coronation, however, derives from the writings of John Apokaukos, Metropolitan of Naupaktos, and Demetrios Chomatianos, Archbishop of Ochrida, who himself performed the ceremony. Both of these learned prelates appear to have regarded the anointing of an Emperor as a normal and customary part of the Byzantine coronation ritual. Apokaukos, writing to Theodore after the capture of Thessalonica, laments the fact that his infirmity may cause him to miss the coronation and *anointing* of the new Emperor.<sup>20</sup> The decree promulgated by the synod of bishops at Arta at about the same time sets out the reasons why Theodore should be proclaimed, crowned and *anointed* as Emperor. The document specifically mentions three procedures—proclamation, coronation and unction.<sup>21</sup> And at the end of it the bishops of Epiros assert their right to acknowledge, crown and *anoint* Theodore as their sole Emperor.<sup>22</sup>

The statements of Demetrios Chomatianos are still more revealing. He was delegated to perform the coronation ceremony after the Bishop of Thessalonica, Constantine Mesopotamites, had declined the honour.<sup>23</sup> He claimed to be empowered to do so by virtue of the special privileges inherent in his office. One of the prerogatives of an Archbishop of Ochrida was, he declared, the right to crown and anoint Emperors.<sup>24</sup> Whatever the justice of this claim, which was said to

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VI (1974), 251–61. Cf. D. M. Nicol, *The Despotate of Epiros* (Oxford, 1957), pp. 65–6.

20. John Apokaukos, ed. V. G. Vasilievskij, 'Epirotica saeculi XIII', *VV*, III (1896), 288 lines 7–8: . . . μηδ' ἐς τοσούτον ἐλάσαι με τὸ δυστύχημα, ὡς τῆς σῆς στεφανφορίας ἀπολειφθεῖναι με καὶ τῆς χρίσεως.

21. *Ibid.*, 285 line 17: . . . τὴν ἀναγόρευσιν δηλαδὴ καὶ στεμματοφορίαν καὶ χρίσιν. . . .

22. *Ibid.*, p. 286 lines 8–11: . . . Καὶ τοῦτον μόνον βασιλέα ὁμολογοῦμεν, καὶ τοῦτον στέφομεν καὶ τοῦτον χρίομεν. Cf. Nicol, *Despotate of Epiros*, pp. 65–6, 91–2.

23. Nicol, *op. cit.*, p. 65.

24. Demetrios Chomatianos, ed. J. B. Pitra, *Analecta Sacra et Classica Spicilegio Solesmensi Parata*, VI (Paris and Rome, 1891), cols. 494–5. Cf. Akropolites, ed. Heisenberg, I, p. 34 lines 1–5: ὁ δὲ Βουλγαρίας ἀρχιεπίσκοπος Δημήτριος τὸ βασιλικὸν περιδιδύσκει τοῦτον διάδημα, ὡς ἔφασκεν, αὐτόνομος ὢν καὶ μηδενὶ εὐθύνας ὀφείλων δοῦναι, καὶ διὰ ταῦτα ἐξουσίαν ἔχειν βασιλέας χρίειν οὓς τε ἂν καὶ ὅπου καὶ ὅτε βούλοιο. Gregoras, I, p. 26.

date back to the days of Justinian, Chomatianos clearly believed that the anointing of Emperors was an ancient and customary part of the coronation ritual. That the Patriarch at Nicaea, Germanos II, who rudely challenged the claim, believed the same is evident from the letter of protest that he wrote to Chomatianos after the event. The Patriarch asked for proof of a precedent for the coronation of an Emperor by an 'Archbishop of Bulgaria'. But more particularly he questioned the nature of the oil and the chrism (*myron*) that Chomatianos had used for anointing Theodore. He objected that it could not possibly be the right stuff, since all the old stock of properly consecrated chrism in Thessalonica must long ago have been exhausted, and a new supply could only be prepared and blessed by a Patriarch.<sup>25</sup> Germanos and Chomatianos were both sensitive about their status and their rights; but neither seems to have doubted that Byzantine Emperors had customarily been anointed at their coronations. There is no hint that this was an innovation, still less that it was a practice borrowed from the Latins.<sup>26</sup>

On the other hand Chomatianos, who was a more erudite canonist than the Patriarch, does appear to draw a distinction between anointing with oil and anointing with the *myron*. In his reply to the Patriarch he asks how it is that Germanos is not concerned to dispute the source of chrism prepared for baptism but only of that for the anointing of Emperors, 'judging all such preparations to be invalid unless they flow from the hand of the Bishop of Constantinople'. 'Everyone knows', he writes, 'that the anointing of Emperors (*ἡ βασιλικὴ χρίσις*) is a part of the office of the hierarchy. In the event that an Emperor is not anointed by the Patriarch, then the ritual may be performed by any of the bishops immediately subordinate to him. . . . On the other hand it is not the prevailing custom that the man proclaimed as Emperor should be anointed with chrism (*myron*) but only with consecrated oil. Nevertheless, if we (in Thessalonica) had to anoint Emperors with chrism we would

25. Chomatianos, ed. Pitra, cols. 484–5.

26. Ibid., col. 490, where Chomatianos refers to 'the ancient customs (observed) in Constantinople regarding the induction of Emperors and the election of Patriarchs . . .' (*καὶ τὰ ἐν Κωνσταντινουπόλει ἀρχαῖα ἔθη εἰς τε προβλήσεις βασιλέων, καὶ προχειρίσεις πατριάρχων* . . .).



have no need of manufactured or synthetic stuff. . . . We could use that which flows in rivers from the tomb of the great martyr Demetrios. . . . But in any case even the manufacture of such *myron* from its many odoriferous ingredients is not, as you seem to think, your monopoly (as Patriarch) . . . for it can be prepared by any Orthodox bishop, as the 6th canon of the Council of Carthage decrees . . .'.<sup>27</sup>

The distinction that Chomatianos makes between oil (*έλαιον*) and chrism (*μύρον*) can hardly be dismissed as mere hair-splitting, eager though he was to score points off the Patriarch. He specifically emphasises that it was not the custom for Byzantine Emperors to be anointed with the *myron* but only with normally consecrated oil.<sup>28</sup> In this respect it is possible that it was the Patriarch at Nicaea who was guilty of an innovation and perhaps of unwittingly adopting western practice. In English and French coronations, for example, unction had been

27. Ibid., cols. 493–4. Cf. Nicol, op. cit., pp. 93–4; Karpozilos, 'Ecclesiastical Controversy : : ', p. 84; Menevizoglou, op. cit., pp. 129–40. Council of Carthage, Canon VI, in G. A. Rhalles and M. Potles, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ιερῶν κανόνων*, III (Athens, 1853), pp. 309–13. The Patriarch Kallistos I, writing over a hundred years later (1355), was not so confident as Chomatianos about the propriety, or the efficacy, in the sacrament of baptism of the *myron* flowing from the tomb of the *myroblytos* Demetrios in Thessalonica. See his exhortation to the clergy of Trnovo in F. Miklosich and J. Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi*, I (Vienna, 1860), no. CLXXXVI, p. 441 lines 5f. He also had fixed views about the patriarchal monopoly of the preparation of the *myron* for baptism (ibid., lines 30f.). E. Herman, op. cit., *Sbornik Nikou* (Sofia, 1940), p. 513, concludes that the *Chrysamweite* was the monopoly of the Patriarchs or of the heads of autocephalous churches by the ninth century. It is noteworthy that the *myron* prepared by a Patriarch who was subsequently deemed to be in heresy was held to be invalid. So John Bekkos, the unionist Patriarch, at his trial in 1285, asks: . . . καὶ αὐτὸ δὲ τὸ τελεστικὸν ἅγιον ἀθετεῖσθαι μύρον καὶ παραρρίπτεσθαι, ὅτι ἡμῖν τετέλεσται; George Pachymeres, *De Michaelae Palaeologo* (CSHB), p. 98 lines 9f.

28. Chomatianos, ed. Pitra, col. 493. . . . ἄλλως τε δὲ οὐδὲ τοῦ ἐπικρατοῦντος ἔθους ἐστὶ μύρῳ χρῆσθαι τὸν εἰς τὴν βασιλείον ἀνάρρησην προκαλοῦμενον, ἐλαίῳ δὲ ιεροῖς ἁγιασμένῳ ἐπάσματος. . . . Christophilopoulou, op. cit., pp. 211–12, notes the difference of opinion on the matter between Chomatianos and the Patriarch and ventures the suggestion that Chomatianos was not properly acquainted with former Byzantine practice and adopted that prevailing in the West, where simple oil and not chrism was used for the purpose. The significance of the statements of Chomatianos was also noticed by M. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica Christianorum orientalium*, III (Paris, 1930), pp. 152–3.

administered in two forms, oil and chrism, at least since the eighth century.<sup>29</sup> At all events, Byzantine texts relating to the coronation of Emperors in and after the mid-thirteenth century almost all tell of anointing 'with the *myron*' as an established custom. The practice is attested at least as early as the coronation of Michael VIII. Pachymeres reports that when the Patriarch Joseph made his will it was discovered that the document's references to the Emperor (Michael VIII) had omitted the important epithet *ἅγιος* which signifies that the Emperors have been anointed with the *myron* (ὡς χρυσθέντας μύρω τοῦ βασιλεῖς). Investigations revealed that the word had been included in the Patriarch's original draft but that it had been deliberately left out by the monks who copied it, since they were shocked at such hagiolatry of an Emperor whom they regarded as a heretic. The inference must be that Michael VIII was anointed with the *myron* at his coronation in December 1258.<sup>30</sup> In the case of Michael VIII's son Andronikos II, who was crowned as co-Emperor in 1272, the evidence is lacking, although John Cantacuzene confidently describes Andronikos as 'one anointed by God'.<sup>31</sup> But the accounts of later coronations leave no room for doubt. In 1294, for example, Michael IX Palaiologos was 'anointed with the holy *myron*' as co-Emperor with his father.<sup>32</sup> In 1325 Andronikos III was similarly anointed

29. Cf. H. A. Wilson, *op. cit.*, 481f.

30. Pachymeres, *De Michaelae Palaeologo*, p. 507 lines 3–4. For the date and circumstances see P. Wirth, 'Die Begründung der Kaisermacht Michaels VIII. Palaiologos', *JÖBG*, X (1961), 85–91; Nikephoros Gregoras, *Rhömische Geschichte (Historia Rhomaïke)*, übersetzt und erläutert von J. L. van Dieten, I (Bibliothek der griechischen Literatur, 4: Stuttgart, 1973), pp. 101–2, 236–7. The Patriarch Arsenios in his *Testamentum* (MPG, CXL, 948–57) mentions only the 'coronation' of Michael VIII and not, as van Dieten implies (*op. cit.*, p. 237), the *Schilderhebung*.

31. John Cantacuzenus, *Historiae (CSHB)*, I, p. 45 lines 17–18: *πρῶτον μὲν γὰρ τὸ χεῖρα κινήσαι κατὰ βασιλέως καὶ τῷ Θεῷ κεχρισμένου...*

32. Pachymeres, *De Andronico Palaeologo*, p. 196 lines 17–18: *χρίει δ' ὁ τεράρχης τῷ θεῷ μύρω τὸν τῆς βασιλείας συμμετάσχοντα*. L. G. Westerink, 'Le Basilikos de Maxime Planude', *BS*, XXIX (1968), p. 43 lines 1179–92: *Ὡς δέ σε τῆς παιδείας ἄλλος ἔδοξεν ἔχειν... αὐτίκα, ὁ πάλαι πάντες ἰδεῖν ἐποθοῦμεν Ῥωμαῖοι, καὶ τῷ κατὰ νόμους χρίσματι χρίει καὶ στέφει τῷ στέφει... καὶ ὁ πατήρ σε τότε καὶ βασιλεὺς ἅμα τῷ πατριάρχῃ ἐν μέσῳ τοῦ θεοῦ σηκοῦ ἐπ' ὀκρίβαντος ἔχρισέ τε καὶ ἔστεψεν ἐν ὧν πάντων...* Cf. P. Lamma, 'Un discorso inedito per l'incoronazione di Michele IX Paleologo', *Aevum*, XXIX

‘with the holy *myron*’ as co-Emperor with his grandfather by the Patriarch Esaias.<sup>33</sup> In 1341 John Cantacuzene advised the widowed Empress Anne of Savoy that her son John (V) Palaiologos should be ‘anointed with the holy *myron* and that his head should be adorned with a crown’.<sup>34</sup> In 1346 and again in 1347 John Cantacuzene was himself crowned and anointed as Emperor with the holy *myron*. The first ceremony was performed at Adrianople by Lazaros, Patriarch of Jerusalem, the second at Constantinople by the Patriarch Isidore. Cantacuzene makes a point of observing that his second coronation was not strictly necessary, since he had already been crowned by the Patriarch of Jerusalem whose anointing of him ‘with the holy *myron*’ (χρίσις τοῦ ἁγίου μύρου) was enough to confirm him as Emperor. But in order to leave no pretext for his calumniators to say that he had not been crowned in Constantinople in accordance with the ancient custom of Emperors, the ceremony was performed a second time.<sup>35</sup>

In 1353 John Cantacuzene’s own son Matthew had to be anointed with the *myron* ‘according to custom’ before he could be deemed to be co-Emperor.<sup>36</sup> At much the same period Pseudo-Kodinos in his chapter on the coronation of an Emperor describes how, after the recitation of the prayers proper for the anointing of Emperors (τὰς ἐπὶ χρίσει βασιλέων

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(1955), p. 65 and n. 4. Raybaud, op. cit., p. 71, takes no account of the evidence of Apokaukos and Chomatianos and is therefore at fault in stating that ‘le seul sacre attesté au XIII<sup>e</sup> (siècle) est celui de Michel IX, en 1295 (sic)’.

33. Cantacuzenus, I, p. 198 lines 8–10, p. 251 line 12. Cf. Gregoras, I, p. 373. Ursula V. Bosch, *Kaiser Andronikos III. Palaiologos. Versuch einer Darstellung der byzantinischen Geschichte in den Jahren 1321–1341* (Amsterdam, 1965), pp. 35–6.

34. Cantacuzenus, II, p. 64: . . . χρίειν τε μύρω τῷ ἁγίῳ καὶ στέφει τὴν κεφαλὴν κατακοσμεῖν.

35. Cantacuzenus, II, p. 564; III, p. 29 lines 9–14. For the dates and circumstances see D. M. Nicol, *The Byzantine Family of Kantakouzenos (Cantacuzenus) ca. 1100–1460* (Dumbarton Oaks Studies, XI: Washington, D.C., 1968), pp. 61, 65.

36. Cantacuzenus, III, pp. 270–71: τῷ μύρω χρίεσθαι κατὰ τὸ ἔθος . . . οὐ γὰρ ἐνδέχεται τοῖς ἄλλοις παρασημοῖς κοσμηθέντα μὴ καὶ τὸν ἀρχαῖον τρόπον στέφεσθαι. Cf. the remarks of Nicholas Kabasilas in his Encomium of the Emperor Matthew, ed. M. Jugie, ‘Nicolas Cabasilas, Panégyriques inédites de Mathieu Cantacuzène et d’Anne Paléologine’, *Izvestija russkago archeologičeskago instituta v Konstantinopole*, XV (1911), 116–17: Καὶ πρῶτα μὲν ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἦν ἡ

συντεθειμένας εὐχὰς', the Patriarch anoints the head of the Emperor, tracing the sign of the cross with the holy *myron*, and saying in a loud voice 'hagios'.<sup>37</sup> The author of the protocol on the coronation of Manuel II in 1391 describes how the Patriarch 'anoints (the Emperor) with the *myron* of spikenard and places a cap on his head' (καὶ χρίει αὐτὸν τῷ μύρῳ τοῦ νάρδου καὶ φορένει αὐτὸν κουκούλιον).<sup>38</sup> The Patriarch Antonios IV, in his celebrated letter to Basil I of Moscow in 1393, emphasizes that the Byzantine Emperor, though in straitened circumstances, is still the Emperor of all Christians, still elected and prayed for by the Church and anointed with the great *myron*.<sup>39</sup> Symeon of Thessalonica, writing in the fifteenth century, devotes a chapter of his *De Sacro Templo* to the metaphysical reasons why an Emperor is anointed with the *myron* and inaugurated with prayers.<sup>40</sup>

It would have been helpful if Symeon had commented upon the origin as well as the metaphysics of this practice. One significant point in his account, however, is that the Patriarch traces the sign of the cross on the Emperor's head with the *myron*,

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φήφορ ἐπιθυμούντων εὐτυχεῖν, νὺν δέ σοι Θεὸς αὐτὸς διὰ τῶν ιερῶν τὴν βασιλείαν ἐγχειρίζει. . . καὶ τὴν ἱερὰν ἐστεφάνωσε κορυφῇ. . . Gregoras, III, p. 204 lines 12–16, says simply that the imperial crown was placed on Matthew's head by his father, 'assisted, according to ancient custom, by the Patriarch Philotheos who had recently succeeded Kallistos'.

37. Pseudo-Kodinos, *Traité des Offices*, ed. J. Verpeaux (Paris, 1966), p. 258 lines 19–23: 'Ὁ δὲ πατριάρχης χρίει σταυροειδῶς τὴν κεφαλὴν τοῦ βασιλέως τῷ θεῷ μύρῳ, ἐπιλέγων μεγάλη τῇ φωνῇ τὸ «ἅγιος». Cf. Cantacuzenus, I, p. 198 lines 8–10.

38. Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Verpeaux, Appendix VI ('Protocole anonyme du Laurentianus VIII, 17 sur le couronnement de Manuel II'), p. 355 lines 5–7, 9–15.

39. Miklosich and Müller, *Acta et Diplomata Graeca Medii Aevi*, II, p. 190: μέχρι τῆς σήμερον τὴν αὐτὴν χειροτονίαν ἔχει ὁ βασιλεὺς παρὰ τῆς ἐκκλησίας καὶ τὴν αὐτὴν τάξιν καὶ τὰς αὐτὰς εὐχὰς, καὶ τῷ μεγάλῳ χρίεται μύρῳ καὶ χειρο(τ)οῦ νείται βασιλεὺς καὶ αὐτοκράτωρ τῶν Ῥωμαίων, πάντων δηλαδὴ τῶν χριστιανῶν. . . E. Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium* (Oxford, 1948), pp. 194–6, and J. W. Barker, *Manuel II Palaeologus (1391–1425)* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1969), pp. 106–9, provide English translations of parts of this letter. Both render the word *myron* by the English 'myrrh', which is a misunderstanding.

40. Symeonis Thessalonicensis Archiepiscopi Opera Omnia, in MPG, CLV (*De Sacro Templo et ejus Consecratione*), cap. CXLVI, 353: Διατί χρίεται μύρῳ ὁ βασιλεὺς, καὶ εὐχαῖς τελειοῦται. Menevizoglou, op. cit., p. 225.

but that he anoints 'his head only', thus demonstrating that the Emperor is the anointed of Christ and 'the head of all' (τῇ κεφαλῇ αὐτοῦ σταυροειδῶς ἐγγέει τὸ μύρον· δεικνὺς ὡς ὁ Χριστὸς αὐτὸν ἔχρισε . . . καὶ κεφαλὴν πάντων δείκνυσι. Διὰ τοῦτο γὰρ καὶ μόνον χρίει τὴν κεφαλὴν . . .).<sup>41</sup> The significance lies in the contrast with the western coronation ritual in which the Emperor's body was anointed with chrism and his head with oil. Theophanes, followed by Constantine Manasses, remarks upon the odd manner in which the Pope anointed Charlemagne with oil 'from head to foot'.<sup>42</sup> This was never Byzantine practice. Nor does it seem that Byzantine Emperors were ever anointed in two kinds.

Demetrios Chomatianos believed that anointing of the Emperor's head with oil was the normal and traditional procedure; and the use of the words *χρίσμα*, *χρίσις*, *χρίειν* in other sources of the twelfth as well as the thirteenth centuries should perhaps be understood in this sense, literally and not metaphorically. The terms did not need to be qualified by the addition of the words 'with oil' since this would have been taken for granted. It is misleading to assume that the Greek word *χρίσμα* is the equivalent of the Latin word *chrisma*, since the former is frequently used to mean the act of unction, whether with oil or with *myron*, while the latter always means the chrism or the stuff of unction, i.e. the Greek *myron*. The *χρίσμα* with which a Byzantine Emperor was anointed seems at first to have been normally consecrated oil. The use of the holy *myron*, the chrism of post-baptismal confirmation in the Greek rite, was a later development. And the sources suggest that it is in this respect that something new crept into the Byzantine coronation ritual in the thirteenth century. The innovation was not in the *act* of unction itself but in the *stuff* with which it was performed. It cannot be by accident that in every case in which the verb *χρίειν* is used in accounts of Byzantine coronations after the mid-thirteenth century it is qualified by the words τῷ θείῳ (ἀγίῳ) μύρῳ. The first properly attested case is that of the coronation of Michael IX as co-Emperor in 1294. But the remarks of

41. Symeon of Thessalonica, op. cit., 353C.

42. Theophanes, *Chronographia*, ed. C. de Boor (Leipzig, 1883–5), I, pp. 472–3; Constantine Manasses, *Compendium Chronicum* (CSHB), p. 193 lines 4513–19.

Demetrios Chomatianos to the Patriarch of Nicaea some seventy years earlier and the references in Pachymeres to the anointing of Michael VIII seem to indicate that the practice of confirming Emperors with the *myron* was already introduced at Nicaea before 1261. Exactly when it became established procedure is not clear. But some explanation of the reasons for its introduction into the ceremony may at least be suggested.

L.-P. Raybaud proposed that the ceremony of anointing might have been introduced into the late Byzantine coronation ritual by usurpers of the throne as a means of sanctifying their actions.<sup>43</sup> This is an attractive theory, but the facts seem to be against it. John Cantacuzene was certainly glad to be able to say that he had been anointed as Emperor; and it seems probable that Michael VIII, as Raybaud says, was in the same case. But evidence exists, slight though it may be, that their predecessor, Theodore II Laskaris, was also anointed at his coronation; and he was no usurper.<sup>44</sup> It is certain too that Theodore Komnenos Doukas was anointed as Emperor at Thessalonica, which takes the practice back to the first quarter of the thirteenth century. From the viewpoint of Nicaea Theodore was certainly a usurper. But he was not so in the eyes of those who proclaimed, crowned and anointed him; and they believed that they were acting in full accord with Byzantine tradition. So far therefore as concerns the anointing of Emperors with oil there are grounds for thinking that the transition from the figurative to the literal sense of the verb *χρίειν* had occurred before 1204. The statement of Niketas Choniates about the coronation of Alexios III, cited above, should perhaps be taken to mean exactly what it says—that the Emperor went in to St. Sophia ‘that he might be anointed according to custom and be invested with the imperial regalia’.<sup>45</sup>

If the ceremony of anointing with oil can be traced back to the twelfth century, then it becomes more possible to accept that it may have been imitated or adapted from the western coronation ritual. Some of the Emperors of the Komnenos dynasty were

43. Raybaud, *op. cit.*, pp. 72–3.

44. Gregoras, I, p. 55 line 23.

45. Niketas Choniates, *Historia*, p. 603 line 7 (cited above, n. 4). Christophilopoulou, *op. cit.*, p. 211, argues for a literal interpretation of the words of Choniates about the anointing of Alexios III.

much more prone to adopting Latin practices than were their successors at Nicaea. But anointing with the chrism of the holy *myron* was, it appears, a later development, and one that had a much deeper significance for the religious character of the Byzantine coronation ceremony. It is tempting to suppose that it originated in the Empire at Nicaea and that it became an established part of the coronation ritual after 1261, until in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries it had become an indispensable element in the making of an Emperor. There is no evidence that it became so as a result of western influence or in imitation of Latin coronation ritual. The *myron* was applied, as Symeon of Thessalonica says, to the Emperor's head, not to his body; and the Emperor was anointed in the sign of the cross and acclaimed by the Patriarch and the people as 'holy'. Most probably the practice is to be seen as yet another manifestation of the increased influence and authority claimed and exercised by the Church in political affairs in the late Byzantine period.

The comparison that Demetrios Chomatianos makes of the anointing of Emperors with the unction of baptism may not be without its significance. Theodore Balsamon, writing about 1190, maintained that the act of anointing cleansed an Emperor from the sins that he had committed before his proclamation, just as the guilt of original sin is cleansed by the unction of baptism. Thus, in 969, the Patriarch Polyeuktos had contrived to cleanse John Tzimiskes even from the guilt of murder by anointing him as Emperor.<sup>46</sup> It is arguable that Balsamon was referring back to the tenth century the practice of his own day in the matter of anointing Emperors. But at all events the word that he uses is *χρίσμα* and not *μύρον*—implying a comparison with the unction of baptism and not with that of confirmation. The anointing of the Emperor's head with the holy *myron* was to enter the coronation ritual after Balsamon's time. The act seems to have been deliberately modelled on the chrismation or post-baptismal unction of a neophyte which, also administered in the sign of the cross, 'set the seal of the Holy Spirit' (*σφραγίς δωρεᾶς*

46. Theodore Balsamon, *Canones*, in *MPG*, CXXXVII, 1156: . . . ἐπεὶ τὸ χρίσμα τοῦ ἁγίου βαπτίσματος τὰ πρὸ τοῦτο ἁμαρτήματα ἀπαλείφει . . . πάντως καὶ τὸ χρίσμα τῆς βασιλείας τὸν πρὸ ταύτης γεγονότα φόνον παρὰ τοῦ Τζιμισκῆ ἐξῆλειψεν. Cf. Brightman, *op. cit.*, pp. 384–5; Menevizoglou, *op. cit.*, pp. 225–6.



πνεύματος ἁγίου) on the newly-baptized person. So it is that Symeon of Thessalonica explains it in the coronation ceremony by saying that the Patriarch ‘sets the seal on the Emperor with the *myron*’ (τῷ μὲν μύρῳ σφραγίζων αὐτὸν).<sup>47</sup>

As Pachymeres says in the case of Michael VIII the word *hagios* in the Emperor’s title was the guarantee that he had been anointed with the *myron*, which by the thirteenth century had already become a necessary element in his inauguration.<sup>48</sup> The repeated chanting of the word *hagios* by the Patriarch, the archdeacon and the people prescribed by the fourteenth- and fifteenth-century coronation formulae, as well as by Symeon of Thessalonica, acclaimed the anointed Emperor as one blessed and confirmed by the only authority higher than his own.<sup>49</sup> Makarios of Ankyra goes so far as to say that his anointing with the *myron* made the Emperor, as the anointed of the Lord, not only holy (*hagios*) but also the equal of a bishop, a priest and a teacher of the faith.<sup>50</sup> The Emperors were not now, as they had been in the past, simply *de facto* the elect of God. Their power and their position was now seen to derive from the Church not merely by anointing with oil but by chrismation with the holy *myron*, whose manufacture was the monopoly of the Patriarch and which alone confirmed the reception of a true Christian by the Church.

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47. Symeon of Thessalonica, op. cit., 353B. Chrismation with the holy *myron* was performed separately to confirm the recantation and reception back into the Church of certain types of heretics, categorized in Canon 95 of the Council in Trullo: Rhalles and Potles, op. cit., II, p. 530.

48. Pachymeres, *De Michaele Palaeologo*, p. 507.

49. Pseudo-Kodinos, ed. Verpeaux, pp. 258 lines 19–29, 354 line 21–355 line 5. On the significance of the words *σφραγίς*, *σφραγίζω*, *ibid.*, p. 223 n.1. Symeon of Thessalonica, op. cit., 353C: . . . καὶ τὸ Ἅγιος ἀνακράζει, δεικνὺς ὅτι ἐκ τοῦ ἁγίου καθαγιάζεται. Symeon makes much the same point in his *De sacris ordinationibus* when contrasting the ordination of a bishop with the chrismation of an emperor: MPG, CLV, 417A: ὁ μὲν βασιλεὺς τὰ τῆς ἱερωσύνης οὐκ ἔχει . . . μόνον δὲ ἀναγορεῖται ἅγιος τῇ χρίσει τοῦ μύρου. Cf. 432B. . . . ὁ μὲν τῷ χρίσματι ἅγιος, ἥτοι οὐ εὐσεβὴς βασιλεὺς, δὲ γὰρ ἀρχιερεὺς ἅγιος τῇ χειροτονίᾳ.

50. Makarios of Ankyra, ed. Dositheos of Jerusalem, *Τόμος Ἀγάνης* (Jassy, 1698), cap. XXIX; cited by L. Allatius, *De Ecclesiae Occidentalis atque Orientalis Perpetua Consensione* (Cologne, 1648), col. 219: ὅτι χριστὸς κυρίου ὁ βασιλεὺς, καὶ ἅγιος, τῷ χρίσθαι μύρῳ καὶ τῶν τοῦ ἱεροῦ βήματος, καὶ ἀρχιερεὺς, καὶ ἱερεὺς, καὶ διδάσκαλος πίστεως.